

Chapter 6

CHALLENGES OF THE SPECIAL DIABETES PROGRAM FOR INDIANS

The Special Diabetes Program for Indians provided much needed funding for diabetes treatment and prevention services. However, significant diabetes-related challenges remain in American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. As part of its evaluation of the Special Diabetes Program for Indians, the Indian Health Service (IHS) National Diabetes Program developed a set of questions regarding the challenges of the diabetes grant programs. The questions assessed the challenges related to staffing, space needs, training and technical assistance, education, behavior change, and evaluation. This chapter highlights the key challenges reported by the diabetes grant programs established with Special Diabetes Program for Indians funding.

A. Staffing

The IHS National Diabetes Program asked the diabetes grant programs about staffing challenges that occurred during implementation of their activities.

- A significant proportion of the diabetes grant programs reported that they have **vacancies** in their communities for dietitians or public health nutritionists (45%), nurses (34%), diabetes educators (37%), primary care providers (37%), medical specialists (39%), physical activity specialists (52%), and diabetes coordinators (26%).

B. Space

The IHS National Diabetes Program asked the diabetes grant programs about space problems that occurred during implementation of their activities.

- 46% of the diabetes grant programs reported **finding adequate space** was a significant problem.

C. Access

The IHS National Diabetes Program asked the diabetes grant programs about challenges in access to services that occurred during implementation of their grant programs.

- 29% of grant programs report that **being located in a remote area** makes access to services a significant challenge.

D. Clinical

The IHS National Diabetes Program asked the diabetes grant programs about clinical challenges faced during implementation of their activities.

- 44% of the diabetes grant programs reported that they faced challenges during the early phases of program development on **methods for screening for diabetes**.
- 47% of the diabetes grant programs reported that they faced challenges in the **development of clinical guidelines and standards of care** for diabetes.
- 49% of the diabetes grant programs reported that they faced challenges in **program development on the medical treatment of diabetes**.

E. Education

The IHS National Diabetes Program asked the diabetes grant programs about education challenges faced during implementation of their activities.

- A significant proportion of the diabetes grant programs reported that they needed additional technical assistance in **developing education materials** (38%) and **developing education programs** (48%).
- 55% of the diabetes grant programs reported they needed additional technical assistance in **achieving certification for reimbursement** for diabetes education services.
- 22% of the diabetes grant programs reported that they **lacked culturally appropriate diabetes education materials**.

F. Behavioral

The IHS National Diabetes Program asked the diabetes grant programs about behavioral challenges faced during implementation of their activities.

- 18% of the diabetes grant programs reported **feeling that diabetes is too big a problem to address**.
- 28% of the diabetes grant programs reported that **community members think there is no way to avoid diabetes**.

- 29% of the diabetes grant programs reported that **community members think there is no way to avoid the health problems** sometimes associated with diabetes.
- 61% of the diabetes grant programs reported that their program needs **technical assistance to help clients change behavior**.

G. Evaluation and Data Collection

The IHS National Diabetes Program asked the diabetes grant programs about evaluation challenges faced during implementation of their activities.

- 37% of the diabetes grant programs reported that **program evaluation** was a significant challenge faced by their program.
- 57% of the diabetes grant programs reported that **epidemiology and surveillance activities** (i.e., tracking cases) were a significant challenge.

H. Training and Technical Assistance

The IHS National Diabetes Program asked the diabetes grant programs about training and technical assistance challenges faced during implementation of their activities.

- 34% of the diabetes grant programs reported that additional technical assistance for **grant writing and planning** could be used.
- 36% of the diabetes grant programs reported that additional technical assistance for **planning and community assessment** could be used.
- 28% of the diabetes grant programs reported a significant need for technical assistance on program management and leadership skills.
- 46% of the diabetes grant programs reported a significant need for additional training in RPMS/PCC.
- 42% of the diabetes grant programs reported a need for additional training and technical assistance on the **diabetes chart audit and Epi Info software**
- 62% of the diabetes grant programs reported that additional technical assistance in **statistics, data analysis, and research on program impacts and outcomes** could be used.

Summary

The Special Diabetes Program for Indians provided the IHS National Diabetes Program with the opportunity to ask the diabetes grant programs about the challenges that remain in their AI/AN communities. In its evaluation, the IHS National Diabetes Program determined that the majority of diabetes grant programs faced challenges related to staffing, space needs, training and technical assistance, education, behavior change, and evaluation. The IHS National Diabetes Program and its partners will continue to provide the diabetes grant programs with the leadership and assistance necessary to meet and rise above these challenges.

“My dream is to have each child able to grow up to be happy and healthy with wellness in their minds and bodies.”

Betty Marshall (Yankton Sioux)

